



Eurasian Eagle Owl

Bubo bubo

Classification *What groups does this organism belong to based on characteristics shared with other organisms?*

Class: Aves (birds)

Order: Strigiformes (owls)

Family: Strigidae (typical owls)

Genus: Bubo (eagle-owls and horned owls)

Species: *bubo*



Distribution *Where in the world does this species live?*

Eurasian eagle owls inhabit the Palearctic ecoregion. This ecoregion includes Europe, Asia (north of the Himalayan foothills), northern Africa, and the north central portions of the Arabian Peninsula. These owls can range from Siberia in the north to Ethiopian region in the south.

Habitat *What kinds of areas does this species live in?*

Eurasian eagle owls are found in woodlands, deserts, mountains, open grasslands, and riverbeds. They prefer rocky landscapes for their nesting sites and will scrape a shallow nest depression in rocky habitats with suitable water and food resources.

Physical Description *How would this animal's body shape and size be described?*

- Eurasian eagle owls are the largest owls in the world and are known for their large orange eyes. The range from 23-28" (58-71 cm) in length with a wingspan approximately 4.9-6.6 feet (1.5-2 m).
- These owls weigh between 56-148 ounces (1600-4200 gm). The average owl weighs 99 oz (2800 gm).
- Males are smaller than females.
- The owls have a facial disk with black, gray, and white markings. The disk is topped by prominent ear tufts., similar to those found on the American great horned owl.
- Eurasian eagle owls are a tawny mottled brown color with buff colors. Their upper parts that are darker than their lower ones which have black streaks. Their throat is a whitish color.
- Individual owls have unique vocalizations and can be identified by them.

Diet *What does this species eat?*

In their historic range: Eurasian eagle owls are typically nocturnal hunters, their prey includes small mammals like rats, mice, voles, and rabbits. They are able to catch prey on the ground or in flight, preferring open spacious hunting grounds. Their dominant prey species varies based on habitat, but most often includes small rodents.



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At the zoo: Mice, rats, chicks and quail are fed to owls at Denver Zoo

Predators *What eats this species?*

Once they reach adulthood, Eurasian eagle owls have a very low risk of predation. Camouflage and protective mothers keep young owls safe.

Social Organization *How does this animal interact with others of its species?*

Eurasian eagle owls are solitary birds, except when paired for mating. They are generally monogamous with pairs typically staying together for life.

Life Cycle *How does this species mate, raise young, grow and develop?*

Eurasian eagle owls begin breeding around 1-3 years of age, and will typically breed once a year. Courtship begins in the late fall and nesting occurs in January or February. Mated pairs will track each other using clucking and light staccato vocalizations. The nest can be found in rocky crevices, cave entrances, or sheltered cliff ledges. They typically lay 1-4 whitish eggs which are incubated by the female while the male provides food for her. Eurasian eagle owlets imprint on the first visualized animal, this strong tendency makes the release of captive bred owlets into the wild challenging. About 3 weeks after hatching the owlets are capable of feeding and swallowing on their own. They begin short conditioning flights at about 60 days and in the fall, they leave or are driven off the nest. Once they reach adulthood, Eurasian eagle owls are relatively long lived, typically reaching 20 years in the wild and up to 60 years in captivity.

Adaptations *What physical and behavioral characteristics enable this animal to survive and thrive?*

- Eurasian eagle owls hunt using sound, they have one of the most **acute sense of hearing** among birds. Their ears are placed asymmetrically on their heads to improve the detection of prey location.
- These owl's **large orange eyes** provide excellent night vision.
- **Owl flight feathers have a downy fringe** which reduce the sound produced during flight, allowing owls to be silent hunters.
- Eurasian eagle owls have **powerful feet** that are superior hunting tools.

Collection Connection

Denver Zoo houses several Eurasian eagle owls. Two are part of the zoo's Ambassador Animal collection which introduces visitors to animals in this collection through presentations and up-close encounters.

Seymour is a male, who was hatched at Denver Zoo 4/30/2017.

Vienna is a female. She is Seymour's mother and was hatched 5/24/1994.



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Conservation Status *Is this animal at risk for extinction and why?*

IUCN Status: Least Concern

Even though numbers are declining, the rate of decline doesn't approach the criteria for a higher status of vulnerable. This is partially due to its vast geographic range.

Resources and Where to Learn More

Animal Diversity Web: https://animaldiversity.org/accounts/Bubo_bubo/

Eurasian Eagle Owl, National Aviary: <https://www.aviary.org/animals/eurasian-eagle-owl>